

UG MARYLAND YMF STATE WETLAND CONSERVATION PLAN

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: October 16, 2002

Location: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
177 Admiral Cochrane Drive
Annapolis, MD 21401

An attendance list is located on the last page of the minutes.

I. Introduction

Denise Clearwater described the handouts distributed to the workgroup. The handouts consisted of the current draft of the Wetland Conservation Plan with the most recent proposed changes shown in bold. Proposed changes reflect the comments received by MDE during the public comment period. Another set of handouts presented the comments organized by Plan section, page number, and entity providing the comment. MDE's response to each comment was also included. A slide show that summarized the comments was presented. The work group requested that the slide show be added to MDE's web page.

Additional language was requested to state that the intent of the framework section is not to write a history of wetland or wetland management. MDE agreed to add the language.

II. Review of Proposed Changes

Baseline

The work group briefly discussed some additional changes for this section. There was a request to verify the calculation for the percentage of wetland acreage in Carroll County. A request was also made to calculate total wetland acreage in Table II-1. The work group also requested that acreage from the DOQQ maps be compared to NWI results.

Note: After the meeting, MDE began to investigate completion of the calculation of wetland acreage from DOQQs. Existing available information from DOQQ maps has been added to the latest draft, to be distributed shortly. The process for calculating acreages for remaining counties and maps will be a lengthy process that cannot be completed within a short time frame. MDE proposes a new recommendation for the Plan directing agencies to complete the acreage calculations.

Management Framework

The Workgroup suggested that the framework be moved to the back of the document as an appendix.

Goals and Objectives

In order to focus on the most critical parts of the document, the Workgroup agreed to use most of the meeting time to review the goals and objectives sections. Unless otherwise noted, MDE agreed to make the requested changes and address the concerns expressed by the Workgroup.

GOAL #1

Objective 1A

Establish current inventory of wetlands statewide.

Jeff Trulick (Corps of Engineers) suggested that an interactive web page be created for the public to submit information on wetland boundaries, significant areas, etc.

Revised language was suggested for the task to update wetland maps. The new language would call for a stable source of funding to update maps periodically.

Objective 1C

Assess status of determining wetland function

The Workgroup supported consistent approach to functional assessments.

Objective 2A

Document and evaluate wetland threats and trends.

The Workgroup observed that threats and trends information could be used to target areas where wetland maps should be updated.

GOAL #3

Objective 3A

Identify and assess gaps in wetland and other related regulatory programs.

George Wilmot (SWQAC, MCC) noted that if sediment and erosion control were enforced more stringently, indirect impacts would be reduced. He suggested increasing fines to create a greater disincentive for violations. He also suggested a faster response to reports of violations, with

direct contact to the office responsible for the program. A more rapid report of the response and results of the investigation were also suggested.

Barbara Samoraczyk (MACO) requested that the State consider establishing a 100-foot buffer around streams. **Note:** Stream management issues are beyond the scope of this Plan. However, MDE does anticipate revising waterway construction regulations during 2003-4. The issue of establishing a stream buffer would be more appropriately addressed through the waterway regulations.

Objective 3C

Identify inconsistencies between local-level development requirements and development restrictions within the State/federal regulatory permit process.

Some omissions were found in Table IV-2 showing local government regulations. Steep slope information was requested for Charles County. Julie LaBranche (Ches. Bay Critical Area Commission) noted that all counties in the Critical Area would have steep slope provisions. A heading for the table on each page was also requested.

Objective 3D

Assess the effectiveness of the current processes of wetland mitigation, restoration, and creation, and how adequately they achieve “no net loss” of wetland acreage and function.

Julie LaBranche asked if mitigation site requirements included establishment of a vegetated buffer. Denise Clearwater explained that there was not a formal requirement in the regulations. A request was made to try to address the issue and require vegetated buffers.

Objective 3E

Identify current agricultural activities for which expedited wetlands, waterways, or floodplain authorizations can be granted.

Jeff Trulick expressed interest in trying to do expedited reviews of minor projects without doing a new General Permit. MDE will follow up on this issue with the Corps.

Objective 3F

Adopt training and certification of public and private professionals in the delineation of all regulated wetlands.

There was agreement to rephrase the objective so it would not be a requirement for MDE to formally adopt a certification program. The new language will direct MDE to promote, support or recognize a certification program. Other language for establishing a certification program will remain.

Objective 3G

Establish guidelines for integration of wetlands conservation with Smart Growth during the permit process.

A request was made to include more expedited processing for in the General Permit for activities in SAMPs (Special Area Management Plan).

Objective 3H

Adopt methodologies for assessing cumulative wetland impacts and benefits, on a watershed basis, and a means for integrating such assessments in wetland permitting, conservation, management and planning.

Jeff Trulick recommended creating a central place, such as on a Web site, to show where activities are taking place. The review of activities could then be related to other goals and resource conditions.

GOAL #4

Objective 4A

Conduct watershed-scale identification and prioritization of key wetlands and potential restoration sites; identify mechanisms for preservation and restoration of key wetlands.

There was a discussion about establishing a wider buffer around wetlands. Denise Clearwater explained why MDE believed that widening the buffer would not necessarily provide additional protection and may fail to meet the other objective of efficiency and effectiveness in the regulatory program. A wider buffer would result in the need to review many more applications, and a thorough review of each may not be possible. The Workgroup agreed that the issue should be addressed through changes in evaluating how buffer activities are reviewed, to ensure that they continue to function and support wetlands.

Jeff Trulick suggested that the Green Infrastructure Assessment be more accessible to the public, such as on a Web page. **Note:** DNR has placed the Green Infrastructure Assessment on its web page. The address is www.dnr.state.md.us/greenways/greenprint/.

Additional language was requested to resolve obstacles in programs related to State/federal wetland or preservation sponsorship, land acquisition, restoration, and investigations.

GOAL #5

Objective 5B

Expand public knowledge and appreciation of the ecological and economic functions and values of wetlands through education and outreach.

Julie LaBranche suggested bringing local governments into the valuation process for wetlands. Local input would be especially important for issues such as the wetland role in flood control.

Appendix – Priority Actions

The Workgroup observed that the Priority Action list was still quite long and redundant. MDE was asked to further consolidate the list, and paraphrase the key action items rather than repeat the exact language from the task lists in their entirety. The Workgroup also requested that priority actions be sorted according to key agencies responsible for the tasks, since this could assist the new Governor in assigning tasks and priorities.

III. Next Steps

The above changes will be made to the Plan and sent to the entire workgroup. If there are serious objections to the language, another meeting will be held to resolve the concerns. If there are no major concerns, the Plan will be made a final draft. The Workgroup will be notified of the status of the Plan as a final draft and support letters will be requested from the organizations participating in the Workgroup. The Plan will be then be sent to Governor for endorsement.

Maryland Wetland Conservation Plan Workgroup Attendance List

Workgroup members In attendance	Workgroup members Not in attendance	MDE Staff, Speakers, Visitors
Louise Lawrence (MD Dept. of Agricult.) Jeff Trulick (US Army Corps of Engineers) Steve Bunker (Nature Conservancy) George Wilmot (SWQAC) Barbara Samorajczyk (MD Assoc. of Counties) Julie LaBranche (Critical Area Commission)	Richard Hersey (Herring Run Assoc.) Regina Poeske (EPA) Evan Smith (Conservation Fund) Joe Berg (BioHabitats) Anne Lynn (Natural Resources Conservation Service) Kevin Kelly (Environ. Systems Anal., Inc.) Pete Alexander (MD Forest Assoc.) Zoe Piendak (Gov. Office of Business Advocacy/DBED) Lynne Hoot (MD Association of Soil Conservation Districts) Suzie Jacobs (MD State Highway Admin.) Lynn Stemmy (MTR SWQAC) Greg Kappler (Coastal Res. Advis. Com.) Bob DeGroot (MAGIC) Mildred Kriemelmeyer (MD Conservation Council) Larry Liebesman (MD Builders Assn.) Trevor Clark (substituting for Bob Pennington) William Giese (MASCD) Bob Kaufman (MD Builders Association) Tim Goodger (Nat. Marine & Fisheries) Mike Fritz (Environmental Protection Agency) Deborah Weller (MD Office of Planning) Jenn Aiosa (Chesapeake Bay Foundation) Robert Agee (MD Aggregates Association) Kathleen McHugh (MD State Builders Assoc.) William Jenkins, DNR Nazir Baig, M-NCPPC (Montgomery Co.)	Denise Clearwater (MDE) Amanda Sigillito (MDE)